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Conrad Black: The climate of fear that gave way to unjustifiable environmental policies

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Body

Upon being re-elected prime minister in 2019, albeit with a minority of MPs and fewer votes than his chief opponent, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that it was time to tackle "our greatest problem: ***climate*** change." It is routinely and endlessly bandied about by most of our politicians and practically all of our media that ***climate*** change is, in the second-most tedious and toe-curling platitude in the current political lexicon (after "systemic racism"), "an existential threat" - i.e., our existence as human beings is threatened by ***climate*** change. Yet there is a great deal of learned dissent from that conclusion, and even those reports most frequently cited as evidence that the end is nigh if we don't pull up our socks and, in the case of Canada, shut down Alberta, if read carefully, do not justify the terrifying headlines that the media normally attaches to them.

These alarmist predictions have been ringing in the eardrums of all of us for decades. For one of the weekly internet columns I write in the United States, I recently recited a few of the more memorable of these jeremiads, including from Al Gore, the centi-millionaire producer of the "settled science" of the "Inconvenient Truth," which hasn't happened yet, and the Prince of Wales, who has been advising us for some time to live under thatch and travel in carpools or on bicycles. At one point, former British prime minister Tony Blair advised us that we only had a few months to take the measures necessary to avoid our self-inflicted ***doom***. As I've written before, what really happened was that after their overwhelming defeat in the Cold War, the intellectual and faddish appendages of the international left, severed from the defunct torso of the Soviet Union, and with unsuspected talents of improvisation, crowded onto the bandwagon that had been rolled determinedly forward by the authentic conservationists and naturalists (as well as the pacifistic kooks), who were rightly complaining about pollution levels and commendably extolling the welfare of wildlife.

This movement had begun unexceptionably enough: everyone is in favour of the environment and no sane person likes pollution. And it was assisted in a multiplicity of unforeseeable ways, such as by U.S. President Richard Nixon, who founded the Environmental Protection Agency and 642 national parks because his parents, in his youth, were too poor to afford real vacations, so they made extensive use of state and national parks. (This is among his many presidential munificence for which his media enemies have given him practically no credit.)

In Canada, the Progressive Conservative party under Brian Mulroney had an enviable record in environmental matters, for which the former prime minister has been justly recognized. But once the international left had shouldered the birdwatchers and lepidopterists aside and mounted their full flank attack on capitalism from this new angle, focusing on the fossil fuel industry, it was going to be a real problem for the Conservative party to hold its support in Alberta and Saskatchewan, while defending itself from the rising crescendo of deindustrialization set up in the rest of the country, in obedience to the fads of the democratic world. It became like a meeting of born-again evangelicals or renouncers of bad habits like alcohol: one country after another required ever-cleaner emissions standards from its automobile manufacturers or abandoned nuclear energy, not because it wasn't efficient or had

damaged the environment, but because if there ever were a problem, it would be a serious one. Thus has Germany, Europe's greatest power since it was unified by Bismarck 150 years ago, transformed itself into an energy vassal of the decrepit, truncated state of Russia, through natural gas imports and an abandoning of nuclear energy.

Those who guided Ontario through an insanely costly pursuit of so-called "sustainable energy" and almost drove it into the status of a have-not province, departed the provincial Liberals shortly before they sank and took over the wheel house of the federal Liberals and began pursuing essentially the same environmental policy. Prime Minister Stephen Harper, an Alberta MP, managed this issue capably, especially when John Baird was environment minister. They spoke of a "Canadian solution," and backed judiciously away from the insane Kyoto Protocol, under which all economically advanced countries were to pay Danegeld to underdeveloped countries - including to China, the chief polluter of the world and ever-present economic threat to the West - in huge dollops of cash as a penalty for developing our economies and thus supposedly endangering the planet. China made itself the head of the claimant countries, known as the G77, despite being the chief wrongdoer.

It is demeaning to see Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole claim that "the debate is over" about fossil fuel use generating environmental damage, and then losing a vote on the importance of this issue to his party's membership. Anyone who has been alive for the last 50 years can see that the ***climate*** is not changing very quickly. This week, the Obama administration's undersecretary of energy for science, Steven Koonin, published his book, "Unsettled: What ***Climate*** Science Tells Us, What It Doesn't, and Why It Matters." This follows such publications as former British chancellor Nigel Lawson's "An Appeal to Reason: A Cool Look at Global Warming," Rupert Darwall's "Green Tyranny" and Bjorn Lomborg's "False Alarm." As Koonin points out, in their latest assessments of ***climate*** science, both the United Nations and the U.S. government make the points that humans had no detectable impact on hurricanes over the last century, the Greenland ice sheet isn't shrinking any more rapidly now than it was 80 years ago and the net economic impact of man-made global warming will be minimal, at least to the end of this century. Add to this the fact that Canada's carbon footprint is not material to the world as a whole, and that the leading climatic offenders, China and India, are not altering their high-pollution economic growth policies and consider the entire subject to be nonsense and hypocrisy. A carbon tax is just a tax increase falsely masquerading as planetary salvation.

It would be too much of a shock to our over-brainwashed political psyche for the Conservative Party of Canada to become a ***climate*** denier, and indeed that position is not justifiable. But it is certainly the role, the duty and a politically advantageous course for the official Opposition to embrace the main body of ***climate*** science that calls for a prudent carbon emissions policy and much more comprehensive research until the likely extent and effects of ***climate*** change are known. This is the policy of reason and of settled science. And it is the policy that will reconcile fair treatment of the persecuted energy and pipeline industries that must be encouraged as the great generators of national wealth they are, with ***climate*** prudence. This is what responsible oppositions do, and this is how they win elections.

National Post

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